

THE  
HILL OF VISION



JAMES STEPHENS

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THE HILL OF VISION



MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
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TORONTO

THE  
HILL OF VISION

BY

JAMES STEPHENS

AUTHOR OF "INSURRECTIONS"

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
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TO  
MY WIFE



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*EVERYTHING that I can spy  
Through the circle of my eye,  
Everything that I can see  
Has been woven out of me.  
I have sown the stars ; I threw  
Clouds of morn and noon and eve  
In the deeps and steeps of blue ;  
And each thing that I perceive,  
Sun and sea and mountain high,  
Are made and moulded by my eye :  
Closing it, I do but find  
Darkness, and a little wind.*



# A PRELUDE AND A SONG

---

## THE PRELUDE

(1)

*SONG! glad indeed I am that we have met,  
Too long, my sister, you have stayed  
from me ;*

*Almost I fancied that you could forget  
Those binding promises, that you would be  
Under the slender interlacing boughs  
Waiting for me.*

*I came and looked about on every side  
But where you hid away I could not see ;  
And first I searched among the meadows  
wide,  
And up the hill, and under every tree,  
And down the stream to see if you were  
there  
Waiting for me.*

#### 4 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

*But when I did not find you in the mead,  
Or by the stream, or under any tree,  
I thought you had forgotten we agreed,  
Not long ago, that surely you would be  
Under the slender interlacing boughs  
Waiting for me.*

*You came to me I do not know from where:  
I stood and saw you not, I turn and see :  
Have you sprung to me from the sunny  
air ?*

*Or in the long grass did you curiously  
Watch while I wandered, laughing as  
you lay  
Waiting for me ?*

*And you have brought your pipe ! let  
us begin,*

*Against your skill I match my poetry :  
A kiss if I should fail, and if I win  
A kiss the same—tune not your melody  
Too high at first, I shall not keep you long  
Waiting for me.*



(2)

O wind that through the winding,  
    green-grown ways,  
At morn or eve doth tender-piping  
    go ;  
Or from the crag, with trumpeting of  
    praise,  
Doth fright the lambs that crop the  
    mead below ;  
From cave or hill or wood  
Or bustling cloud come thou in merry  
    mood ;  
Leave those wild murmurings that  
    make to weep,  
Your long-blown pealing trumpet put  
    away,  
And where a merry holiday we keep  
In sunny fields come thou and dance  
    and leap  
And sing for joy with us the live-long  
    day.

## 6 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

Oft we have seen you linger in the  
corn,  
And all the red caps nodding at your  
play ;  
Or in the croft on breezy summer morn  
Blowing the light-oared thistle balls  
away :  
And one day, unobserved, we watched  
you where  
You stole a ribbon from a maiden  
slim,  
And blew it to a boy who stood and  
prayed,  
Which, e'er he kissed, you snatched  
away from him,  
And whirled it back again unto the  
maid  
Who was his only hope and thought  
and care ;  
And while he sighed and while she  
laughed you took  
The ribbon up and soused it in a brook,  
Lost to the lips of lover anywhere.

And yet again we saw  
You playing with the milkmaids in  
the shaw,  
Where, standing near, a satyr trained  
his eye  
If there was aught forbidden he might  
see,  
And crept upon you with a mind to  
spy  
The cause of that uproarious jollity :  
Then, when the wild one looked too  
curiously,  
You blew his own rough beard and  
shaggy hair,  
And blinded him who stared so  
greedily,  
Because it was not right that he should  
see  
The milkmaid's kirtle that you meddled  
there.

So you can laugh and play ;  
Come pipe with us and join our holiday :

8 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

Join in our song and you may chance  
to win

For you are free of thought, and hath  
no care

To question, did the sinner, told of, sin ?  
Or, who has seen ? or, why, or when,  
or where ?

No longer bide

By screaming crag or murmurous  
waterside,

But your quaint careless lute bring  
with you here

And sing to us and we shall sing to  
you,

Until we find who has the finest ear,  
And who the sweetest voice and gayest  
cheer,

And give to him the praise that is his  
due.

(3)

O nymphs ! if ye will come from spring  
    or lake,  
Or where the sedge is wavering in the  
    stream,  
To dance with us and with us to  
    partake  
A careless fellowship, or with us dream  
Stretched idly on the grass to watch  
    the gleam  
Of sunlight through the leaves—we  
    welcome true  
And will applaud your shy romantic  
    theme,  
Your delicate wild tales and music  
    new ;  
And fair respectful courtesy extend to  
    you.

But ye, goat-footed fellows, keep away,  
Nor through the bushes strain your  
    wily eyes,

## 10 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

For ye would love to spoil our holiday,  
And fright the nymphs away with  
sudden cries,  
And whispers lewd, and vicious enter-  
prise :  
—But if ye promise truly to be good,  
Then come with clamant reeds and  
improvise,  
With antic dance and savour of the  
wood  
And all the games ye learned in sunlit  
solitude.

(4)

Round the trees ye danced and flew  
While the boughs danced down to  
    see,  
And the sun was dancing through  
Leafy spaces on the tree :  
The daisies danced, the meadow-sweet,  
All the swaying grassy blades  
Danced behind the dancing feet  
Of the merry dancing maids.

Left and right and swing around,  
Soar and dip and fall for glee,  
Happy sky and bird and ground,  
Happy wind and happy tree :  
Happy minions, dancing mad,  
Joy is guide enough for you,  
Cure the world of good and bad,  
And teach us innocence anew.

## 12 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

Good and bad and right and wrong,  
Wave the silly words away :  
This is wisdom to be strong,  
This is virtue to be gay :  
Let us sing and dance until  
We shall know the final art,  
How to banish good and ill  
With the laughter of the heart.



## THE SONG

(1)

I HAVE a black, black mind !  
What shall I do ?  
If I could fly and leave it all behind,  
Scaling the blue,  
Over the trees and up and out of sight,  
And wrong and right  
Naming them for the nonsense that  
    they are !  
I'd leave them far,  
Drop them behind with this and that  
    and these,  
The tyrannies  
That promised to be blessings and are  
    woes ;  
The crows  
I fancied to be singing birds,

## 14 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

The words

That drowse and buzz and drone and  
never stay.

Oh ! far away !

Over the pine trees and the mountain  
top,

Never to stop

Lifting wide wings, to fly and fly and  
fly

Into the sky.

(2)

If I had wings just like a bird  
I would not say a single word,  
I'd spread my wings and fly away  
Beyond the reach of yesterday.

If I could swim just like a fish  
I'd give my little tail a swish,  
I'd swim ten days and nights and then  
I never would be found again.

Or if I were a comet bright  
I'd drop in secret every night  
Ten million miles, and no one would  
Know where I kept my solitude.

But I am not a bird or fish  
Or comet, so I need not wish,  
And need not try to get away  
Beyond the reach of yesterday.

(3)

No more of woeful Misery I sing !  
Let her go moping down the pavéd way ;  
While to the sunny fields, and every-  
thing  
That laughs, and to the birds that sing,  
I pass along and tune my happy lay :  
O sunny sky !  
O meadows that the happy clouds are  
drifting by !

I go at ease by the easy-sliding stream  
As by a friend : I dance in solitude  
Among the trees ; I lie and gaze and  
dream  
Along the grass, or hearken to the  
theme  
A lark discourses to her tender brood :  
O sunny sky !  
O meadows that the happy clouds are  
drifting by !

There is a thrush lives snugly in a wall,  
She lets me come and peep into her nest,  
She lets me see and touch the speckled  
ball

Under her wing, and does not fear at  
all,

Although her shy companion is dis-  
tressed :

O sunny sky !

O meadows that the happy clouds are  
drifting by !

Sing out, sing out again ye birds of  
joy !

Tell yet from branch and bough your  
endless tale

Of happiness that nothing can annoy ;  
Altho' your mates seem timorous and  
coy

If ye sing high enough how can ye fail ?

O sunny sky !

O meadows that the happy clouds are  
drifting by !

## 18 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

On every side, far as the eye can see,  
The round horizon, like a bosom's  
swell,

Seems brooding in a sweet maternity,  
Where no thing may be hurt, not  
even me,

But she will stoop and kiss and make  
us well :

O sunny sky !

O meadows that the happy clouds are  
drifting by !

I am the brother of each bird and tree  
And everything that grows—your chil-  
dren glad ;

Their hearts are in my heart, their  
ecstasy :

O Mother of all mothers, comfort me,  
Give me your breast for I am very  
sad :

O sunny sky !

O meadows that the happy clouds are  
drifting by !

(4)

I wandered far away in lucid morn,  
When summer did the happy trees  
adorn ;

I left all that I knew of discontent,  
Of sorrow and distress and angry  
pain,

And did not say to any where I  
went,

Or when, or if I would return again  
From leafy solitude.

I wandered far away and far away,  
And was as happy as a person may  
To hear the birds in wild wood sing  
their strain,

Each hid in bough, a young and  
joyous band,

Who had no care save only to attain  
The food and shelter that lay every  
hand

In leafy solitude.

## 20 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

I wandered far away and did not turn :  
At such a song my heart began to burn,  
And joy that I had never known before,  
And tears that had no meaning I  
    could say,  
Came from the music that the birds  
    did pour  
To me as I went softly on my way  
In leafy solitude.

I wandered far away and I was glad :  
I knew the rapture that the forest had :  
And every bird was good to me and  
    said  
A kindly word e'er I had passed him by,  
The cheery squirrel sat and ate his  
    bread  
And did not fear me when I ventured  
    nigh  
His leafy solitude.



(5)

O birds, my brothers, sing to me once  
more

E'er I return again to whence I came,  
Give me your joy, your innocence,  
your lore,

Your air-born, wind-blown ecstasy I  
claim

Because ye truly are my brothers dear :  
Sing to me once again before I go from  
here.

In woodland ways again we may not  
meet ;

Under the slender interlacing boughs,  
Where all day long the sunbeams flash  
and fleet

On leaf and grass and wing,  
And all day long ye sing  
And hold carouse :

Because ye truly are my brothers dear  
Sing to me once again before I go from  
here.

## 22 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

All things must cease at last ;  
Night cometh after day  
And day is past.  
All things must end,  
And friend from loving friend  
At the long last will rise and go away ;  
And from the slender interlacing boughs  
The leaves that flutter now must fail  
and fall ;  
The time is come I may no more  
carouse,  
Farewell to ye and good-bye to ye all :  
Because ye truly are my brothers dear  
Sing to me once again before I go from  
here.

(6)

O cloud aloof, afar, scarce to be seen !  
O unattainable ! to you alone  
I lift my wings,  
To you I lean,  
I yearn to you beyond all other things ;  
Desperate I am for you, for you I  
    moan ;  
I struggle to you and I always fail,  
I sink and fall, I fall for ever down,  
Deep down where you are not, with-  
    out avail  
Or help or hope : a clod am I, a  
    clown  
Whose wry mouth laughs in fury at  
    his thought ;  
A discontent without a word to say ;  
A hope that cannot fasten upon aught ;  
A nothing that is anything it may ;  
A moodiness, a hatred and a love  
Mixed through of good and bad that  
    cannot show ;

24 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

But you are calm at morning as a dove  
That broods in nest is calm, and in  
the glow

Of day you meet joy everywhere with  
joy,

And, as a woman looking on the child  
That sleeps upon her arm has no annoy,  
With brow of that content and breast  
as mild,

You rest upon the evening and its  
gold,

Its rose and pearl, its tender green and  
grey :

O peacefulness that never can be  
told !

O far away !

Over the pine trees and the mountain  
top,

Never to stop

Lifting wide wings, to fly and fly and fly  
Into the sky.

(7)

Weary indeed I know that this world  
is ;

Then do not sing to me a song of woe,  
But tune your pipe to all of aery bliss  
Ye can remember, and I will not miss  
To join in every chorus that I know :  
Give me the very rapture of your song  
Else I may go away with thoughts that  
do ye wrong.

Sing sweetly, sweetly, once again to me,  
Sing me the joy ye have not reached  
to yet ;

E'er I go hence give me your ecstasy,  
E'er I go hence, e'er far away I flee  
Give me the joy which I may not  
forget :

The very inner rapture of your song :  
Else I may go away with thoughts that  
do ye wrong.

(8)

The joyful song that welcomes in the  
spring,  
The tender mating song so bravely shy,  
The song that builds the nest, the  
merry ring  
When the long wait is ended and ye  
bring  
The young birds out and teach them  
how to fly.

Sing to me of the beech-nuts on the  
ground,  
And of the first wild flight at early  
dawn,  
And of the store of berries some one  
found  
And hid away, until ye gathered round  
And ate them while he shrieked upon  
the lawn.

Sing of the swinging nest upon the tree,  
And of your mates who call and hide  
away,

And of the sun that shines exceedingly,  
And of the leaves that dance, and all  
the glee

And rapture that begins at break of  
day.

(9)

Follow, follow, follow !  
Blackbird, thrush and swallow ;  
The air is soft, the sun is dancing through  
The dancing boughs ;  
A little while me company along  
And I will go with you :  
Arouse, arouse !  
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant  
    song.

Blackbird, thrush and swallow !  
Indeed the visits that I pay are few,  
Then come to me as I have come to you :  
O follow, follow, follow !  
Leave for a little time your nested  
    boughs  
And me accompany along,  
Join me while I am happy :  
Rouse, O rouse !  
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant  
    song.



Sky, sky,  
On high,  
O gentle majesty !  
Come all ye happy birds and follow,  
follow  
Under the slender interlacing boughs  
Blackbird, thrush and swallow !  
No longer in the sunlight sit and drowse  
But me accompany along ;  
No longer be ye mute :  
Arouse, arouse !  
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant  
song.

Lift, lift, ye happy birds,  
Lift song and wing,  
And sing and fly,  
And fly again and sing  
Up to the very blueness of the sky  
Your happy words :  
O follow, follow, follow !  
Where I go racing through the shady  
ways,

## 30 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

Blackbird, thrush and swallow,  
Shouting aloud our ecstasy of praise :  
Under the slender interlacing boughs  
Me company along,  
The sun is coming with us :  
Rouse, O rouse !  
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant  
    song.

(10)

Reach up my wings !  
Now broaden into space and carry me  
Beyond where any lark that sings  
Can get :  
Into the utmost sharp tenuity,  
The breathing - point, the start, the  
scarcely-stirred  
High slenderness which never any bird  
Has winged to yet !  
The moon peace and the star peace  
and the peace  
Of chilly sunlight :  
To the void of space,  
The emptiness, the giant curve, the  
great  
Wide-stretching arms wherein the gods  
embrace  
And stars are born and suns :  
Where germinate  
All fruitful seed, where life and death  
are one,

## 32 A PRELUDE AND A SONG

Where all things that are not their  
times await ;

Where all things that have been again  
are gone :

Deep Womb of Promise ! back to thee  
again

And forth, revived, all things

Do come and go,

Do wax and wane into and from thy  
garden ;

There the flower springs,

Therein does grow

The bud of hope, the miracle to come

For whose dear advent we are striving  
dumb and joyless :

Garden of Delight

That God has sowed !

In thee the flower of flowers,

The apple of our tree,

The banner on our towers,

The recompense, the end of misery,

The mightiness, the purity, the light

Whom we are working to has his abode :

Until our back and forth, our life and  
death

And life again, our going and return  
Prepare the way : until with latest  
breath,

Deep-drawn and agonized, for him we  
burn

A path : for him prepare  
Laughter and love and singing every-  
where,

A morning and a sunrise and a day !  
O, far away !

Over the pine trees and the mountain  
top

Never to stop  
Lifting wide wings, I fly and fly and fly  
Into the sky.

(11)

*Song ! I am tired to death ! here let me  
lie*

*Where we have paced the moving trees  
along,*

*Till I recover from my ecstasy :  
Farewell my Song.*

*Once more unto your pipe I lend my  
rhyme*

*Who paced in woodland ways with you  
along ;*

*We have been happy for a little time :  
Farewell my Song.*

*Soon, soon return or all my world is  
naught ;*

*Come back and we shall pace the woods  
along,*

*And tell unto each other all our thought :  
Farewell my Song.*

*And when again you do come back to me  
Under the sounding trees we'll pace along,  
While to your pipe I raise my poetry :  
Farewell my Song.*

## IN THE POPPY FIELD

MAD Patsy said, he said to me,  
That every morning he could see  
An angel walking on the sky ;  
Across the sunny skies of morn  
He threw great handfuls far and nigh  
Of poppy seed among the corn ;  
And then, he said, the angels run  
To see the poppies in the sun.

‘A poppy is a devil weed,’  
I said to him—he disagreed :  
He said the devil had no hand  
In spreading flowers tall and fair  
Through corn and rye and meadow land,  
And gurth and barrow everywhere :  
The devil has not any flower,  
But only money in his power.



And then he stretched out in the sun  
And rolled upon his back for fun :  
He kicked his legs and roared for joy  
Because the sun was shining down,  
He said he was a little boy  
And wouldn't work for any clown :  
He ran and laughed behind a bee,  
And danced for very ecstasy.

## THE FULNESS OF TIME

ON a rusty iron throne  
Past the furthest star of space  
I saw Satan sit alone,  
Old and haggard was his face ;  
For his work was done, and he  
Rested in eternity.

And to him from out the sun  
Came his father and his friend  
Saying, " Now the work is done  
Enmity is at an end " :  
And he guided Satan to  
Paradises that he knew.

Gabriel without a frown,  
Uriel without a spear,

Raphael came singing down,  
Welcoming their ancient peer ;  
And they seated him beside  
One who had been crucified.

## LIGHT-O'-LOVE

AND now, at last, I must away,  
But if I tend another fire  
In some man's house this you will say  
—It is not that her love doth tire :  
This is the price she has to pay,  
For bread she gets no other way,  
Still dreaming of her heart's desire.

And so she went out from the door  
While I sat quiet in my chair :  
She ran back once, again—no more ;  
I heard a footstep on the stair,  
A lifted latch ; one moment fleet  
I heard the noises of the street,  
Then silence booming everywhere.

## NUCLEOLUS

I LOOKED from Mount Derision at  
Two ivory thrones that were in space,  
Whereon a man and woman sat,  
The very parallels of grace,  
Not lovelier has ever been  
By mortal seen.

Then one unto the other said,  
—Tell me the secret, hidden well,  
Which you have never utteréd,  
And I to you again will tell  
My guarded thought, and we shall know  
Each other so—

Then he—When those who pray beside  
My holy altars do not bear  
A gift I turn my face aside

And do not listen to the prayer,  
But whoso brings a gift shall see  
The proof of me—

And she—When, on a festal day,  
Youth kneels by youth before my  
shrine

I think, if he or he might lay  
A ruddy cheek to mine  
And comfort my sick soul, I'd lay  
My crown away—

## THE SOOTHERER

O LITTLE JOY, why do you run so fast  
Waving behind you as you go away  
Your tiny hand? You smiled at me  
and cast

A silver apple, asking me to play :  
But when I ran to pick the apple up  
You ran the other way.

Little One ! White One ! Shy Little  
Gay Sprite !

Do not turn your head across your  
shoulder

To mock at me ; it is not right  
That you should laugh at me, for I  
am older :

Throw me the silver apple once again  
You little scolder.

I love you very dearly, yes I do ;  
I never saw a girl like you before  
In any place. You are more sweetly  
new

Than a May moon : you are my store,  
My secret and my treasure and the pulse  
Of my heart's core.

Throw me the silver apple—I will run  
And pick it up and give it you again :  
Dear Heart ! Sweet Laughter !—throw  
it then for fun

And not for me—if you will but remain !  
. . . Nay do not run ; I'll stand thus  
far away

And not complain.

Never before—or only one or two :  
I did not like them nearly half so well,  
Nor half of half so well as I like you,  
Throw me the silver apple and I'll tell  
Their names, and what I used to say  
to them,

—The first was Nell.



Throw me the apple and I'll tell you  
more ;

—She had a lovely face, but she was  
fat :

We clung together when the rain  
would pour

Under a tree or hedge, and often sat  
Through long, still, sunny hours—Tell  
what she said ?

I'll not do that.

I really couldn't, no, it would be wrong  
And utterly unfair, I will not say a word  
Of any girl—your voice is like the song  
I heard this morning from a soaring bird  
. . . I'll whisper then if you come  
close to me,

—You've hardly stirred !

She said she loved me better than her  
life.

—You need not laugh, she said so  
anyway,

And meant it too, and longed to be  
my wife :  
She kissed me many times and wept  
to stay  
Within my arms, and did not ever want  
To go away.

But she was fat, I will admit that's true :  
And so I hid when she came seeking me.  
If she had been as beautiful as you . . . !  
You are as slender as a growing tree,  
And when you move the blood goes  
leaping through  
The heart of me.

The other girl ? Yes, she is very fair :  
Her feet are lighter than the clouds on  
high,  
And there is morn and noonday in her  
hair,  
And mellow, sunny evenings in her eye,  
And all day long she sings just like a lark  
Up in the sky.

I say she did—she loved me very well,  
And I loved her until, ah, woe is me !  
Until to-day, when passing through  
    the dell

I met yourself, and now I cannot see  
Her face at all, or any face but yours  
In memory.

I ought to be ashamed ? well amn't I ?  
But that's no comfort when I'm in a trap:  
I tell you I shall sit down here and die  
Unless you stay—you do not care a rap—  
Ah, Little Sweetheart, do not run away,  
. . . Have pity on a chap.

You'll go—then listen, you are just a pig,  
A little wrinkled pig out of a sty ;  
Your legs are crooked and your nose  
    is big,  
You've got no calves, you have a silly  
    eye,  
I don't know why I stopped to talk  
    to you,  
I hope you'll die.

Now cry, go on, mew like a little cat,  
And rub your eyes and stamp and  
tear your wig ;

I see your ankles ! listen, they are fat,  
And so's your head, you're angled like  
a twig,

Your back's all baggy and your clothes  
don't fit

And your feet are big !

She's gone, bedad, she legged it like a  
hare !

You'd think I had the itch, or had a  
face

Like a blue monkey—keeps me stand-  
ing there,

Not good enough to touch her . . . !  
Back I'll race

And make it up with Breed, that's  
what I'll do,

. . . *There is a flower that bloometh,*  
*Tra la la la laddy la. . . .*

## DANNY MURPHY

HE was as old as old could be,  
His little eye could scarcely see,  
His mouth was sunken in between  
His nose and chin, and he was lean  
And twisted up and withered quite,  
So that he could not walk aright.

His pipe was always going out,  
And then he'd have to search about  
In all his pockets, and he'd mow  
—O, deary me ! and, musha now !  
And then he'd light his pipe, and then  
He'd let it go clean out again.

He could not dance or jump or run,  
Or ever have a bit of fun

Like me and Susan, when we shout  
And jump and throw ourselves about :  
But when he laughed then you could  
    see  
He was as young as young could be.

## THE TREE OF THE BIRD

I SAT beneath a tree  
In a wide park,  
There was a lark,  
A bard of ecstasy,  
Who sang amid the leaves of his beloved:  
—“Thou art most fair,  
None can with thee compare,”  
Such was his minstrelsy.  
“Thy flight is with the stars and with  
the wind,  
And thou art kind,  
O, my most well-beloved,”  
And thus, and thus sang he.

The evening sun fell slowly to a hill  
Far off and blue,

52 THE TREE OF THE BIRD

But I was too enraptured with the skill  
Of that young songster, and the still  
Slow rustle of the boughs  
To heed how far the sun had stepped  
Unto his western house.

A languor came upon me, sad  
As was the peace that Adam had  
When, on that woeful morning, he  
Awaked to unknown misery,  
And, all amazed, gave thanks to God  
For the green tree, and the green sod,  
For the clean wind, and for Eve's eyes,  
For all that he had fancied lost  
Of Paradise.

He did a moment furthermore  
Outpour his many-patterned song,  
Down to the ground,  
Up to the sky,  
About, around,  
An ecstasy,  
A sheer and sweet swift rush along ;



THE TREE OF THE BIRD 53

And then the song failed, and he  
threw

His wings upon the air, and flew  
Because he could no longer bide  
From her whom he would nest beside.

A wind came breathing out of space  
Blowing softly on my face ;  
The greying evening stopt and stole  
About the tree, till branch and bole  
Were lost, and there remained to me  
A rustling in a mystery :  
And this—  
A bliss, a happiness,  
A song that had been a caress,  
A memory of joy—which you,  
And every one is welcome to.

## PEADAR ÓG GOES COURTING

Now that I am dressed I'll go  
Down to where the roses blow,  
I'll pluck a fair and fragrant one  
And make my mother pin it on :  
Now she's laughing, so am I—  
O the blueness of the sky !

Down the street, turn to the right,  
Round the corner out of sight,  
Pass the church and out of town—  
Dust does show on boots of brown,  
I'd better brush them while I can  
—Step out, Peadar, be a man !

Here's a field and there's a stile,  
Shall I jump it ? wait a while,  
Scale it gently, stretch my foot  
Across the mud in that big rut

## PEADAR ÓG GOES COURTING 55

And I'm still clean—faith, I'm not !  
Get some grass and rub the spot.

Dodge those nettles, here the stream  
Bubbles onward with a gleam  
Steely white, and black, and grey,  
Bending rushes on its way—  
What's that moving ? It's a rat  
Washing his whiskers, isn't he fat ?

Here the cow with the crumpled horn  
Whisks her tail and looks forlorn,  
She wants a milkmaid bad I guess  
How her udders swell and press  
Against her legs—and here's some sheep,  
And there's the shepherd fast asleep.

This is a sad and lonely field,  
Thistles are all that it can yield,  
I'll cross it quick, nor look behind,  
There's nothing in it but the wind :  
And if those bandy-legged trees  
Could talk they'd only curse or sneeze.

## 56 PEADAR ÓG GOES COURTING

A sour, unhappy, sloppy place—  
That boot's loose ! I'll tie the lace  
So, and jump this little ditch,  
. . . *Her father's really very rich :*  
*He'll be angry*—there's a crow,  
Solemn blackhead ! off you go.

There a big, grey, ancient ass  
Is snoozing quiet in the grass,  
He hears me coming, starts to rise,  
Wags his big ears at the flies.  
. . . *What'll I say when*—there's a frog,  
Go it, long-legs, jig, jig-jog.

*He'll be angry, say*—“ *Pooh, pooh,  
Boy, you know not what you do.*”  
*Shakespeare rot and good advice,  
Fat old duffer*—those field mice  
Have a good time playing round  
Through the corn and underground.

*But her mother is friends with mine,  
She always asks us out to dine,*

PEADAR ÓG GOES COURTING 57

*And dear Nora, curly head,  
Loves me ; so at least she said.*

. . . Damn that ass's hee-hee-haw—  
Was that a rabbit's tail I saw ?

*This is the house, Lord, I'm afraid !  
A man does suffer for a maid.*

. . . *How will I start ?—the graining's*  
new

On the door—O pluck up, do.

Don't stand shivering there like that

. . . The knocker's funny—*rat-tat-tat.*

## NORA CRIONA

I HAVE looked him round and looked  
him through,  
Know everything that he will do  
In such a case, and such a case,  
And when a frown comes on his face  
I dream of it, and when a smile  
I trace its sources in a while.

He cannot do a thing but I  
Peep to find the reason why,  
For I love him, and I seek,  
Every evening in the week,  
To peep behind his frowning eye  
With little query, little pry,  
And make him if a woman can  
Happier than any man.

Yesterday he gripped her tight  
And cut her throat,—and serve her right!

## THE RUNE

THE sun and the star,  
The moon and the sea,  
As they wandered afar  
Sent a message to me.

For our friend, lovingly  
We have fashioned a moral,  
When there's room to agree  
There is no room to quarrel.

And, therefore, we now  
Send this thought to the friend  
Whom we love, showing how  
Every quarrel will end.

To be far brings you near,  
But too near is too far ;  
Can you love without fear  
When the door's on the jar ?

## BESSIE BOBTAIL

As down the street she wambled slow,  
She had not got a place to go :  
She had not got a place to fall  
And rest herself—no place at all.  
She stumped along and wagged her  
pate  
And said a thing was desperate.

Her face was screwed and wrinkled  
tight  
Just like a nut—and, left and right,  
On either side she wagged her head  
And said a thing, and what she said  
Was desperate as any word  
That ever yet a person heard.



I walked behind her for a while  
And watched the people nudge and  
smile :

But ever as she went she said,  
As left and right she swung her head,  
—“ *O God He knows,*” and “ *God He  
knows,*  
*And, surely God Almighty knows.*”

## THE TINKER'S BRAT

I SAW a beggar woman bare  
Her bosom to the winter air ;  
And within the tender nest  
Of her famished mother-breast  
She laid her child,  
And him beguiled,  
With crooning song into his rest.

With crooning song and tender word,  
About a little singing bird,  
Who spread her wings about her  
    brood,  
And tore her bosom up for food,  
And sang the while,  
Them to beguile,  
All in the forest's solitude.

And, hearing this, I could not see  
That she was clad in misery ;  
For in her heart there was a glow  
Warmed her bare feet in the snow :  
In her heart was hid a sun  
Would warm a world for every one.

## NOTHING AT ALL

THERE was a man was very old :  
He sat beside a little fire,  
And watched the flame begin to tire.

He held his hands out to the heat,  
And in a voice was half a scold,  
He told Creation he was cold.

And he was tired and feeble, too :  
He could not lift up from his seat  
To reach the fuel at his feet.

“ Perhaps,” said he, “ God does not  
know  
That I am nearly frozen through ;  
He might not like it if He knew.

\* \* \* \* \*

Poor old chattering, grumbling wight !  
God will hardly come to fetch  
Wood for such an ancient wretch.

But He will send you rain more cold,  
To quench that little flickering light,  
Like this, and He will freeze you quite :  
. . . Men must die when they are old.

## WHY TOMÁS CAM WAS GRUMPY

IF I were rich what would I do ?  
I'd leave the horse just ready to  
shoe,  
I'd leave the pail beside the cow,  
I'd leave the furrow beneath the  
plough,  
I'd leave the ducks tho' they should  
quack,  
“ Our eggs will be stolen before you're  
back ” ;  
I'd buy a diamond brooch, a ring,  
A chain of gold that I would fling  
Around her neck. . . . Ah, what an  
itch,  
If I were rich !

What would I do if I were wise ?  
I would not debate about the skies,  
Nor would I try a book to write,  
Or find the wrong in the tangled right,  
I would not debate with learned men  
Of how, and what, and why, and when ;  
I'd train my tongue to a linnet's song,  
I'd learn the words that couldn't go  
    wrong—  
And then I'd say . . . And win the  
    prize,  
If I were wise !

But I'm not that nor t'other, I bow  
My back to the work that's waiting  
    now.  
I'll shoe the horse that's standing  
    ready,  
I'll milk the cow if she'll be steady,  
I'll follow the plough that turns the  
    loam,  
I'll watch the ducks don't lay from  
    home.

—And I'll curse, and curse, and curse  
again

Till the devil joins in with his big amen,  
And none but he and I will wot

When the heart within me starts to rot,  
To fester and churn its ugly brew—

. . . Where's my spade? I've work  
to do.



## THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME

SHE watched the blaze,  
And so I said the thing I'd come to say,  
Pondered for days.

Her lips moved slow,  
And the wide eye she flashed on me  
Was sudden as a blow.

She turned again,  
Her hands clasping her knees and did  
not speak :  
She did not deign.

And I, poor gnome !  
A chided cur crawls to a hole to hide :  
. . . I toddled home.

## SHAME

I WAS ashamed, I dared not lift my  
    eyes,  
I could not bear to look upon the  
    skies ;  
What I had done ! sure, everybody  
    knew !  
From everywhere hands pointed where  
    I stood,  
And scornful eyes were piercing through  
    and through  
The moody armour of my hardihood.

I heard their voices too, each word an  
    asp  
That buzz'd and stung me sudden as  
    a flame :

And all the world was jolting on my  
name,  
And now and then there came a  
wicked rasp  
Of laughter, jarring me to deeper  
shame.

And then I looked, but there was no  
one nigh,  
No eyes that stabbed like swords or  
glinted sly,  
No laughter creaking on the silent air :  
And then I found that I was all alone  
Facing my soul, and next I was aware  
That this mad mockery was all my  
own.

## I WISH

I WISH I had not grown to man's  
estate,  
I wish I was a silly urchin still,  
With bounding pulses and a heart elate  
To meet whatever came of good or ill.

Of good or ill ! not knowing what was  
good,  
But groping to a better than I knew,  
And guessing deeper than I under-  
stood,  
And hoping truths that never could be  
true.

Of good or ill ! when, so it often seems,  
There is no good at all but only ill.

Alas, the sunny summer - time of  
dreams,  
The dragons I had nerved my hand to  
kill,  
The maids I might have rescued, and  
the queen  
Whose champion long ago I could  
have been.

## SECRETS

WHEN I was young I used to think,  
That every eye peered through a chink,  
And every man was hid behind  
His own thick self where none could  
find.

That every woman in the street,  
Looking fair and smiling sweet,  
Was maybe hiding thoughts that were  
Not quite so sweet, nor quite so fair  
As her kind smile and blossom face ;  
She hid in some forgotten place  
Within herself and would not dare  
To let another see her there.

And though I'm older still I see  
In every face a mystery.

## CROOKED-HEART

I LOOSED an arrow from my bow  
Down into the world below ;  
Thinking “ This will surely dart,  
Guided by my guiding fate,  
Into the malignant heart  
Of the person whom I hate.”

So by hatred feathered well  
Swift the flashing arrow fell :  
And I watched it from above  
Disappear  
Cleaving sheer  
Through the only heart I love.

Such the guard my angels keep !  
But my foe is guarded well :  
I have slain my love and weep  
Tears of blood, while he, asleep,  
Does not know an arrow fell !

## MAC DHOUL

I SAW them all,  
I could have laughed out loud  
To see them at their capers ;  
That serious, solemn-footed, weighty  
    crowd  
Of angels, or say resurrected drapers :  
Each with a thin flame swinging round  
    his head,  
With liting wings and eyes of holy  
    dread,  
And curving ears strained for the great  
    foot-fall,  
And not a thought of sin— . . .  
I don't know how I kept the laughter  
    in.



For I was there,  
Unknown, unguessed at, snug  
In a rose tree's branchy spurt,  
With two weeks' whisker blackening  
    lug to lug,  
With tattered breeks and only half a  
    shirt.  
Swollen fit to burst with laughter at  
    the sight  
Of those dull angels drooping left and  
    right  
Along the towering throne, each in a  
    scare  
To hear His foot advance  
Huge from the cloud behind, all in a  
    trance.

And suddenly,  
As silent as a ghost,  
I jumped out from the bush,  
Went scooting through the glaring,  
    nerveless host  
All petrified, all gaping in a hush :

Came to the throne and, nimble as a rat,  
Hopped up it, squatted close, and  
    there I sat,  
Squirming with laughter till I had to cry,  
To see Him standing there  
Frozen with all His angels in a stare !

He raised His hand,  
His hand ! 'twas like a sky !  
Gripped me in half a finger,  
Flipped me round and sent me spin-  
    ning high  
Through screaming planets : faith, I  
    didn't linger  
To scratch myself, and then adown I  
    sped  
Scraping old moons and twisting heels  
    and head,  
A chuckle in the void, till . . . here I  
    stand  
As naked as a brick,  
I'll sing the Peeler and the Goat in  
    half a tick.

## THE MERRY POLICEMAN

I WAS appointed guardian by  
The Power that frowns along the sky,  
To watch the tree and see that none  
Plucked of the fruit that grew thereon.

There was a robber in the tree,  
Who climbed as high as ever he  
Was able, at the top he knew  
The apple of all apples grew.

The night was dark, the branch was  
thin,  
In every wind he heard the din  
Of angels calling—"Guardian, see  
That no one climbs upon the tree."

80 THE MERRY POLICEMAN

And when he saw me standing there  
He shook with terror and despair,  
But I said to him—" Be at rest,  
The best to him who wants the best."

So I was sacked, but I have got  
A job in hell to keep me hot.

## THE FAIRY BOY

A LITTLE Fairy in a tree  
Wrinkled his wee face at me :  
And he sang a song of joy  
All about a little boy,  
Who upon a winter night,  
On a midnight long ago,  
Had been wrapt away from sight  
Of the world and all its woe :  
Wrapt away,  
Snapt away  
To a place where children play  
In the sunlight every day.

Where the winter is forbidden,  
Where no child may older grow,  
Where a flower is never hidden  
Underneath a pall of snow ;

Dancing gaily  
Free from sorrow,  
Under dancing summer skies,  
Where no grim mysterious morrow  
Ever comes to terrorize.

This I told a priest and he  
Spoke a word of mystery,  
And with candle, book and bell,  
Tolling Latin like a knell,  
Ruthlessly  
From the tree,  
Sprinkling holy water round,  
He drove the Fairy down to hell,  
There in torment to be bound.

So the tree is withered and  
There is sorrow on the land :  
But the devils milder grow  
Dancing gay  
Every day  
In that kinder land below :  
There the devils dance for joy  
And love that little wrinkled boy.

## WHAT THE DEVIL SAID

IT was the night time, God the Father  
Good,  
Weary of praises, on a sudden stood  
Up from His throne and leaned upon  
the sky,  
For He had heard a sound, a little  
cry,  
Thin as a whisper climbing up the  
steep.

And He looked down to where the  
Earth asleep  
Rocked with the moon, He saw the  
whirling sea  
Swing round the world in surgent  
energy,

84 WHAT THE DEVIL SAID

Tangling the moonlight in its netted  
foam,  
And nearer saw the white and fretted  
dome  
Of the ice-capped pole spin back again  
a ray  
To whistling stars, bright as a wizard's  
day.

But these He passed with eyes intently  
wide,  
Till closer still the mountains He espied  
Squatting tremendous on the broad-  
backed Earth ;  
Each nursing twenty rivers at a birth.  
And then minutely sought He for the  
cry  
Had climbed the slant of space so  
hugely high.

He found it in a ditch outside a town,  
A tattered, hungry woman crouching  
down



WHAT THE DEVIL SAID 85

By a dead babe—so there was nought  
to do,

For what is done is done ; and back  
He drew

Sad to His Heaven of ivory and gold ;  
And as He sat, all suddenly there rolled  
From where the woman wept upon the  
sod

Satan's deep voice, "*O thou unhappy  
God !*"

## TO THE TREE

BALLAD ! I have a message you must  
bear

Unto a certain tree : I may not tell  
Where she abides, only, she is more fair  
Than any tree that grows down in a  
dell,

Or on a mountain top, or by a well,  
Or as a lovely sentinel beside  
A roaming stream. No words can  
speak her well,

Nor lyric sing enough her arms so wide,  
Her grace, her peace, her innocence,  
her happy pride.

Come, Ballad, quickly back to me  
again,

After you have delivered to the tree  
My humble service, and if she will deign  
To trust you with a message back,  
then see

You strictly do forget no word that she  
May speak to you, no smallest yes or no:  
And what she looked like when she  
spoke of me,

And if she begged you stay or bade  
you go,

Or hesitated ere she said—what you  
shall know.

Say—I shall be with her ere day is  
done,

When the flushed evening blanches to  
the dark,

And one last gleam of all that was the  
sun

Rests on her topmost branches, when  
the lark

Dips to the dew-steeped grasses in the  
park

And only now and then sends from  
below

A sleepy song : then, swift as to the  
mark

An arrow flies, so swiftly will I go  
Nor stay until her branches wide I  
halt below.

There is a crow, of sly and wicked  
fame,

Who, with Apollo's aid, I hope to slay,  
For he has dared and come nigh to  
my dame

And in her heart would hide him well  
away :

A wicked crow is he and hoary-grey ;  
He listens to the life that throbs so  
fleet

Along the trunk and by the slender way  
Of her young veins whereat the  
branches meet :

A curious, bad, old, wicked crow and  
indiscreet.

Of every tree most beautiful and  
queen !

The grasses at her feet live in her glee,  
About her all the forest folk are seen ;  
The timid nymph bends there a ready  
knee,

And mighty Pan himself, unwillingly,  
Yet all perforce, must stoop before  
her grace,

And round about in a wild ecstasy  
The light-foot satyrs (stayed from an  
embrace)

Stare shamefully and dance and mince  
with antic pace.

Fortress of melody ! Well hidden  
heart !

Deep bosomed lady whom I love so well !  
Dear solitude of singer without art !  
Sweet shadiness wherein I long to  
dwell,

Enrapt and comforted from any spell  
Of thought or care or woefulness or sin ;

Or trouble which a man may not fore-  
tell ;

Or slothful ease which it is death to win ;  
Or fear that cometh at the last and  
creepeth in.

If you among her little leaves will fly  
And what they whisper bring to me  
again,

Dear Ballad, I will write your history  
Upon a sheepskin with a golden pen ;  
It shall be read by women and by men :  
Each youth will sing it to his paramour  
As they go roving in the evening when  
All joy is innocence and love is lore,  
And you and youth and love will live  
for evermore.

Rapture and joy and ecstasy and pain !  
The windy trumpets of the void shall  
soar

Over the sky. The Morning Stars  
again

Will sing together joyous as of yore :  
The sea shall tramp with banners on  
the shore :  
The little hills skip merrily along  
The forest leave its field and with a  
roar  
Stride down the pathway shouting out  
a song,  
And everything be happy as the day  
is long.

*Envoi*

Ballad, farewell ! go tell her that I  
burn,  
Say that I die if she refuses me :  
And I shall wait and sigh till you  
return,  
And plague the god of life and love  
to favour me.

## ORA PRO NOBIS

A BIRD sings now ;  
Merrily  
Sings he  
Of his mate on the bough,  
And her eggs in the tree ;  
But yonder a hawk  
Swoops out of the blue  
And the singing is over  
—Is this true ?  
God now have mercy on me and on  
you.



## THE END OF THE ROAD

*To Æ.*

THIS is a thing is true,  
Everything comes to an end :  
The loving of me and you,  
The walking of friend and friend.

Shall I weep the beauty I knew,  
Or the greatness gathered away  
Or the truth that is only true,  
As the things that a man will say ?

The child and the mother will die,  
The wife and husband sever,  
The sun will go out of the sky,  
And the rain will be falling for ever.

94 THE END OF THE ROAD

For ever until the waves rear  
To the skies with a terrible tune,  
And cover the earth and the air,  
And wash up the beach of the moon.

Then go, for all things must end,  
And this is true as I say—  
A friend will be leaving a friend,  
And a man will be going away.

## WIND AND TREE

*To Æ.*

“ A WOMAN is a branchy tree  
And man a singing wind,  
And from her branches carelessly  
He takes what he can find :  
Then wind and man go far away  
While winter comes with loneliness,  
With cold and rain and slow decay  
On woman and on tree till they  
Droop to the ground again and be  
A withered woman, a withered tree ;  
While wind and man woo undismayed  
Another tree, another maid.”

## EVE

LONG ago, in ages grey,  
I was fashioned out of clay :  
Builded with the sun and moon,  
Kneaded to a holy tune ;  
And there came to me a breath  
From the House of Life and Death.

Then the sun roared into fire,  
And the moon with swift desire  
Leaped among the starry throng  
Singing on her journey long ;  
And I climbed up from the sod,  
Holding to the hand of God.

In a garden fair and wide  
Looking down a mountain side,  
Prone I lay and felt the press  
Of Immensity's caress,

There I lived a space and knew  
What the Power meant to do.

Till upon a day there came  
Down to me a voice of flame,  
“Thou the corner-stone of man,  
Rise and set about my plan,  
Nothing doubting, for a guide  
I have quickened in thy side.”

From the garden wide and fair,  
From the pure and holy air,  
Down the mountain side I crept  
Stumbling often, ill-adept ;  
Feeling pangs of woeful bliss,  
Rounding from the primal kiss.

Then from out my straining side  
Came the son who is my guide :  
Him I nursed through faithful days  
Till I faltered at his gaze,  
Staring boldly when he saw  
I was woman, life, and law.

Life and law and dear delight :  
I the moon upon the night  
All alluring : I the tree  
Growing nuts of mystery :  
I the tincture and the dew  
That the apple reddens through.

Weaving Life and Death I go :  
Building what I do not know :  
Planting tho' in sore distress,  
Gardens in the wilderness :  
Palaces too big to scan  
By the little eye of man.

Still the sun roars out in fire,  
And the moon with pale desire  
Keeps the path appointed her  
In the starry theatre :  
Sun and moon and I are true,  
To the work we have to do.

## THE BREATH OF LIFE

*(To Elizabeth Bloxham)*

AND while they talked and talked, and  
while they sat  
Changing their base minds into baser  
coin ;  
And telling—they ! how truth and  
beauty join,  
And how a certain this was good, but  
that  
Was baser than the viper or the toad,  
Or the blind beggar glaring down the  
road.

I turned from them in fury, and I ran  
To where the moon shone out upon  
the height,

100 THE BREATH OF LIFE

Down the long reaches of a summer  
night  
Stretching slim fingers, and the starry  
clan  
Grew thicker than the flowers that we  
see  
Clustered in quiet fields of greenery.

The quietudes that sunder star from  
star,  
The hazy distances of loneliness,  
Where never eagle's wing or timid press  
Of lark or wren could venture, and the  
far  
Profundities untravelled and unstirred  
By any act of man or thought or word.

These held me with amazement and  
delight :  
I yearned up through the spaces of  
the sky,  
Beyond the rolling clouds, beyond the  
high



THE BREATH OF LIFE 101

And delicate white moon, and up the  
height,  
And past the rocking stars, and out to  
where  
The aether failed in spaces sharp and  
bare.

The breath that is the very breath of  
life  
Throbbled close to me : I heard the  
pulses beat,  
That lift the universes into heat :  
The slow withdrawal, and the deeper  
strife  
Of His wide respiration, like a sea  
It ebbed and flooded through im-  
mensity.

The Breath of Life in wave on mighty  
wave !  
O moon and stars swell to a raptured  
song !  
Ye mountains toss the harmony along !

## 102 THE BREATH OF LIFE

O little men with little souls to save  
Swing up glad chantings, ring the  
    skies above,  
With boundless gratitude for bound-  
    less love !

Probing the ocean to its steepest drop ;  
Rejoicing in the viper and the toad,  
And the blind beggar glaring down the  
    road ;  
And they who talk and talk and never  
    stop  
Equally quickening ; with a care to  
    bend  
The gnat's slant wing into a swifter  
    end.

\*           \*           \*           \*           \*

The silence clung about me like a gift,  
The tender night-time folded me around  
Protectingly, and in a peace profound  
The clouds drooped slowly backward,  
    drift on drift

THE BREATH OF LIFE 103

Into the darkness, and the moon was  
gone,  
And soon the stars had vanished every  
one.

But on the sky, a handsbreadth in the  
west,  
A faint cold radiance crept and soared  
and spread,  
Until the rustling heavens overhead,  
And the grey trees and grass were  
manifest :  
Then through the chill a golden spear  
was hurled,  
And the great sun tossed laughter on  
the world.

IN THE COOL OF THE  
EVENING

I THOUGHT I heard Him calling ! Did  
you hear  
A sound, a little sound ? My curious  
ear  
Is dinned with flying noises, and the  
tree  
Goes — whisper, whisper, whisper  
silently,  
Till all its whispers spread into the  
sound  
Of a dull roar . . . Lie closer to the  
ground,  
The shade is deep and He may pass  
us by,  
We are so very small, and His great  
eye,

IN THE COOL OF EVENING 105

Customed to starry majesties, may  
gaze

Too wide to spy us hiding in the maze :  
—Ah, misery ! the sun has not yet gone  
And we are naked : He will look upon  
Our crouching shame, may make us  
stand upright

Burning in terror—O that it were  
night !

He may not come . . . What ? listen,  
listen, now—

He's here ! lie closer . . . *Adam, where  
art thou ?*

## PSYCHOMETRIST

I LISTENED to a man and he  
Had no word to say to me :  
Then unto a stone I bowed,  
And it spoke to me aloud.

“ The force that bindeth me so long,  
Once sang in the linnet’s song,  
Now upon the ground I lie,  
While the centuries go by.

“ Linnets must for joy atone  
And be fastened into stone,  
While upon the waving tree  
Stones shall sing in energy.”

## THE WINGED TRAMP

I SAW a poor man walking slow,  
Scarcely knowing where to go ;  
And from door to door he said,  
Unto those who stood within,  
—“ Give me, with a little bread,  
Absolution for my sin.”

And the people always said,  
—“ Friend, come in and eat our bread ;  
Lay you down and rest a while,  
Sleep a little time and pray  
Unto God and He will smile  
All your weighty sin away.”

Then the poor man rose and flew  
In the air, and no one knew

108 THE WINGED TRAMP

That He was God's beloved Son :  
And He told His Father plain  
What the folk had said and done :  
—So God spared the world again.



## THE MONKEY'S COUSIN

I SHALL reach up, I shall grow  
Till the high gods say—" Hello,  
Little brother, you must stop  
Ere our shoulders you o'ertop."

I shall grow up, I shall reach  
Till the little gods beseech  
—" Master, wait a little, do,  
We are running after you ! "

I shall bulk and swell and scale  
Till the little gods shall quail,  
Running here and there to hide  
From the terror of my stride.

## THE LONELY GOD

*(To Stephen MacKenna)*

So Eden was deserted, and at eve  
Into the quiet place God came to  
grieve.  
His face was sad, His hands hung  
slackly down  
Along His robe, too sorrowful to frown  
He paced along the grassy paths and  
through  
The silent trees, and where sweet  
flowers grew  
Tended by Adam. All the birds had  
gone  
Out to the world, and there was left  
not one  
To sing the lonely God out of His  
grief—

The silence broken only when a leaf  
 Tapt lightly on a leaf, or when the  
     wind,  
 Slow-handed, swayed the bushes to its  
     mind.

And so along the base of a round hill,  
 Rolling in fern, He bent His way  
     until  
 He neared the little hut which Adam  
     made,  
 And saw its dusky roof-tree overlaid  
 With greenest leaves. Here Adam and  
     his spouse  
 Were wont to nestle in their little house  
 Snug at the dew-time : here He, stand-  
     ing sad,  
 Sighed with the wind, nor any pleasure  
     had  
 In heavenly knowledge, for His dar-  
     lings twain,  
 Had gone from Him to learn the mode  
     of pain,

112      THE LONELY GOD

And what was meant by sorrow and  
    despair,  
—Drear knowledge for a Father to  
    prepare.

There He looked sadly on the little  
    place,  
A beehive round it was, without a trace  
Of occupant or owner : standing dim  
Among the gloomy trees it seemed to  
    Him  
A final desolation, the last word  
Wherewith the lips of silence had been  
    stirred.  
Chaste and remote, so tiny and so  
    shy,  
So new withal, so lost to any eye,  
So pac't of memories all innocent  
Of days and nights that in it had been  
    spent  
In blithe communion, Adam, Eve, and  
    He,  
Afar from Heaven and its gaudery.

And now no more ! He still must be  
the God  
But not the friend ; a Father with a  
rod  
Whose voice was fear, whose counte-  
nance a threat,  
Whose coming terror, and whose going  
wet  
With penitential tears ; not evermore  
Would they run forth to meet Him as  
before  
With careless laughter, striving each  
to be  
First to His hand and dancing in their  
glee  
To see Him coming—They would hide  
instead  
At His approach, or stand and hang  
the head,  
Speaking in whispers, and would learn  
to pray  
Instead of asking, “Father, if we  
may.”

114 THE LONELY GOD

Never again to Eden would He haste  
At cool of evening, when the sun had  
    paced  
Back from the tree-tops, slanting from  
    the rim  
Of a low cloud, what time the twilight  
    dim,  
Knit tree to tree in shadow, gathering  
    slow  
Till all had met and vanished in the  
    flow  
Of dusky silence, and a brooding star  
Stared at the growing darkness from  
    afar,  
While haply now and then some nested  
    bird  
Would lift upon the air a sleepy word  
Most musical, or swing its airy bed  
To the high moon that drifted over-  
    head.

'Twas good to quit at evening His  
    great throne,



116      THE LONELY GOD

The smoky censer, bow and stand  
    aside  
All mute in adoration : thronging  
    wide,  
Till nowhere could He look but soon  
    He saw  
An angel bending humbly to the  
    law  
Mechanic ; knowing nothing more of  
    pain,  
Than when they were forbid to sing  
    again,  
Or swing anew the censer, or bow  
    down,  
In humble adoration of His frown.  
This was the thought in Eden as He  
    trod  
. . . It is a lonely thing to be a God.

So long ! Afar through Time He bent  
    His mind,  
For the beginning, which He could  
    not find,



Through endless centuries and back-  
wards still

Endless for ever, till His 'stonied will  
Halted in circles, dizzied in the swing  
Of mazy nothingness—His mind could  
bring

Not to subjection; grip or hold the  
theme

Whose wide horizon melted like a dream  
To thinnest edges. Infinite behind  
The piling centuries were trodden  
blind

In gulfs chaotic—so He could not see  
When He was not who always had  
To Be.

O solitude unspeakable ! to be  
For ever with oneself ! never to see  
An equal face, or feel an equal hand,  
To sit in state and issue reprimand,  
Admonishment or glory, and to smile  
Disdaining what has happened 'the  
while !

O to be breast to breast against a foe !  
Against a friend ! to strive and not  
to know  
The laboured outcome : Love nor be  
aware  
How much the other loved, and greatly  
care  
With passion for that happy love or  
hate,  
Nor know what joy or dole was hid  
in fate.

“ For I have ranged the spacy width  
and gone  
Swift north and south, striving to  
look upon  
An ending somewhere. Many days I  
sped  
Hard to the west, a thousand years I  
fled  
Eastwards in fury, but I could not  
find  
The fringes of the Infinite. Behind

And yet behind, and ever at the end  
 Came new beginnings, paths that did  
     not wend

To anywhere were there: and ever vast  
 And vaster spaces opened—till at last  
 Dizzied with distance, thrilling to a  
     pain

Unnameable, I turned to Heaven again.

“And there My angels were prepared  
     to fling

The cloudy incense, there prepared to  
     sing

My praise and glory—O, in fury I  
 Then roared them senseless, then threw  
     down the sky

And stamped upon it, buffeted a star  
 With My great fist, and flung the sun  
     afar :

Shouted My anger till the mighty  
     sound

Rung to the width, frightening the  
     furthest bound

120      THE LONELY GOD

And scope of hearing : tumult vaster  
still,  
Thronging the echo, dinned my ears,  
until  
I fled in silence, seeking out a place  
To hide Me from the very thought of  
Space.

“ And so,” He thought, “ in Mine own  
Image I  
Have made a man, remote from  
Heaven high  
And all its humble angels : I have  
poured  
My essence in his nostrils : I have  
cored  
His heart with My own spirit ; part  
of Me  
His mind with laboured growth un-  
ceasingly  
Must strive to equal Mine ; must ever  
grow  
By virtue of My essence till he know

Both good and evil through the solemn  
test

Of sin and retribution, till, with zest,  
He feels his godhead, soars to challenge

Me

In Mine own Heaven for supremacy.

“Through savage beasts and still more  
savage clay,

Invincible, I bid him fight a way

To greater battles, crawling through  
defeat

Into defeat again : ordained to meet

Disaster in disaster : prone to fall

I prick him with My memory to call

Defiance at his victor and arise

With anguished fury to his greater  
size

Through tribulation, terror and despair

Astounded, he must fight to higher air,

Climb battle into battle till he be

Confronted with a flaming sword and

Me.

“The topmost blossom of his growing I  
Shall take unto Me, cherish and lift high  
Beside Myself upon My holy throne :

—It is not good for God to be alone.

The perfect woman of his perfect race  
Shall sit beside Me in the highest place  
And be My Goddess, Queen, Com-  
panion, Wife,

The rounder of My majesty, the life,  
Of My ambition. She will smile to see  
Me bending down in worship at her  
knee

Who never bent before, and she will  
say,

—“Dear God, who was it taught *Thee*  
how to pray ? ”

“And through eternity, adown the  
slope

Of never-ending time, compact of hope,  
Of zest and young enjoyment, I and  
She

Will walk together, sowing jollity

Among the raving stars, and laughter  
through  
The vacancies of Heaven, till the blue  
Vast amplitudes of space lift up a song,  
The echo of our presence, rolled along  
And ever rolling where the planets sing  
The majesty and glory of the King.  
Then conquered, thou, eternity, shall  
lie  
Under my hand as little as a fly.”

Then stooping to the hut—a beehive  
round—  
God entered in and saw upon the  
ground  
The dusty garland, Adam, (learned to  
weave)  
Had loving placed upon the head of  
Eve  
Before the terror came, when joyous  
they  
Could look for God at closing of the  
day

124      THE LONELY GOD

Profound and happy. So the Mighty  
Guest  
Bent, took, and placed the blossoms  
in His breast.  
“ This,” said He gently, “ I shall show  
My queen  
When she hath grown to Me in space  
serene,  
And say ‘ ’twas worn by Eve.’ ” So,  
smiling fair,  
He spread abroad His wings upon the  
air.

THE END







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